

Grades 6-8

1.) Grade 7 Multiple-Choice (Standard 5 – Writing Applications)

Read this excerpt from a student paper about a summer program that the student attended.

1.) It was a hot summer morning, and the heat was coming up off the pavement. 2.) You could see it. 3.) I had butterflies in my stomach as I approached the doors of the theater. 4.) I had been in plays before, but I didn't know anyone here, and it felt like I was entering an entirely foreign world. 5.) I pulled the door open slowly and looked around at the faces that greeted me. 6.) I breathed a sign of relief as I saw the familiar nervousness in their eyes. 7.) It seemed I wasn't the only one.

Which of the following is the BEST way to combine Sentences 1 and 2?

- A. It was a very hot that day, so hot that I could see it with my own two eyes.
- B. The hottest day of summer so far, you could see the warmth coming off the pavement.
- C. The heat coming off the pavement that summer morning was so powerful I could see it.
- D. Summer morning was a hot and warm one and you could see it coming off the pavement all the heat.

Correct Answer: C. The heat coming off the pavement that summer morning was so powerful I could see it.

2.) Grade 6 Constructed-Response (Standard 2 – Reading Comprehension)

Read “The Greatest Runner of All Time”. Then answer the question that follows.

The Greatest Runner of All Time

First one person stood up and then another and another. Someone in the crowd began to applaud, and soon everyone else joined in as Glenn Cunningham made his final lap around the track. He was about to break a world record in the mile. As he made his victory lap around the track, one might wonder how he could walk, much less run.

In 1916, when Glenn was seven years old, his legs were so badly burned in a fire that his doctor thought he would never walk again. But Glenn thought otherwise. After spending weeks in bed he got up and started using crutches to get around. When his legs got stronger, he tried walking without the crutches but it was very painful. Glenn would say later, “It hurt like thunder to walk, but it didn’t hurt at all when I ran. So for five or six years, about all I did was run.”

With all the practice he had running, it was natural for Glenn to join his school’s track team. While he was in high school, he became a track star and set record times in the mile run. After he graduated high school he went to the University of Kansas. Glenn Cunningham became known as “The Kansas Flyer,” and he won the National College Amateur Track championships in 1931 and 1932.

Glenn went on to run on the U.S. Olympic Team in 1932, received the Sullivan Award for outstanding amateur athletes in 1933, and won a silver medal in the 1936 Olympic games. The boy who was never supposed to walk again won two National College Amateur Athlete titles in track, was named the most outstanding track performer in the 100-year history of Madison Square Garden in 1978, and was inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1979.

It was never easy for Glenn. It took him nearly an hour to prepare for a race. But he never let that stop him or slow him down. He ran just as hard as he could with his bruised lungs and scarred legs and he won. So if determination and spirit lead a runner to greatness, one could say that Glenn Cunningham was the greatest runner of all time.

ISTEP+ English/Language Arts Sample Items (Grades 6-8)
(Beginning in Spring 2009)

Why does the author refer to Glenn Cunningham as the “greatest runner of all time”? Support your answer with details from the passage.

Scoring:

- 2-point Constructed-Response rubric

Example of a Top-Score Response:

The author probably calls Cunningham the “greatest runner of all time” because Cunningham overcame many challenges to become a very successful athlete. People nicknamed him the “Kansas Flyer” years after doctors told him he would never walk again. Cunningham went on to win many awards, including an Olympic medal in track, and was even inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame. Cunningham was a great athlete because he worked hard and always did his best, no matter what.

3.) Grade 6 Multiple-Choice (Standard 1 – Word Recognition, Fluency, & Vocabulary Development)

Read this statement from the passage.

“It hurt like thunder to walk, but it didn’t hurt at all when I ran.”

The phrase “*it hurt like thunder*” MOST LIKELY means

- A. Glenn ran very quickly wherever he went.
- B. Glenn crashed into things when he walked.
- C. Glenn was in great pain when he walked.
- D. Glenn was afraid of walking to places.

Correct Answer: C. Glenn was in great pain when he walked.

4.) Grade 7 Writing Prompt (Standard 5 – Writing Applications)

Read the writing prompt below. Then, complete the writing activity.

Historical Figure

Suppose you could meet any person from history. Perhaps this person made important decisions that changed the world. Whom would you choose to meet and why?

Write an original story in which you describe your encounter with this person. Be sure to include a detailed account of the events in the story, as well as a description of this person and the setting in which the story takes place.

Prewriting Activity:

Be sure to include:

- the name and description of the person you would like to meet
- a description of the setting of the story
- a narrative account of the events that take place in your story
- a beginning, a middle, and an end to your story

Scoring:

- 6-point Writing Applications rubric (grades 6-8)
- 4-point Language Conventions rubric (grades 6-8)

NOTE: Each writing prompt will be accompanied by a **blank** prewriting/planning space for students at all grade levels to use in preparation for their final drafts.

5.) Grade 8 Extended-Response (Standard 5 – Writing Applications)

Read the first couple of paragraphs of a student's report about what it's like to have a job as a baker. Then do the writing activity that follows.

What It Takes to Be a Baker

Waking up early in the morning to go to work is probably not part of everyone's idea of the perfect job. Dragging yourself out of bed at 4:00 a.m., even on the coldest winter day, is not for everyone. For those of you who have chosen a career in baking, it is just part of the day-to-day routine.

Bakers must also understand how to choose the right ingredients, how to combine them, how to measure very precise quantities of materials, and they must also understand chemistry. Though it is not listed in any recipe, love and care are what makes the baker's products so sweet. A cinnamon roll made with love will always taste better than one made without!

After reading the report, do you think that you would like to have a job as a baker? Why or why not? Explain the qualities that would make you a good baker, and what qualities you have that would prevent you from being a good baker.

Scoring:

- 4-point Writing Applications rubric (grades 6-8)
- 4-point Language Conventions rubric (grades 6-8)

NOTE: Each extended-response item will be accompanied by a **blank** prewriting/planning space for students at all grade levels to use in preparation for their final drafts.

6.) Grade 8 Multiple-Choice (Standard 6 – Language Conventions)

Read this sentence.

By the time they arrive, I was finished cooking.

Choose the word or group of words that BEST replaces the underlined part of the sentence.

- A. finish
- B. will finish
- C. have finished
- D. will have finished

Correct Answer: D. will have finished

7.) Grade 8 Constructed-Response (Standard 2 – Reading Comprehension)

Read “Gold Rushes of the American West”. Then answer the question that follows.

Gold Rushes of the American West

Two of the most exciting events in the settlement of the American West were gold rushes in California and Alaska. Gold was first discovered in California in 1848 at John Sutter’s sawmill, located near what is now Sacramento. Thousands of prospectors, known as 49ers, descended on California in hopes of striking it rich. Although a few prospectors made as much as \$2,000 a day, most people found little or no gold. Nevertheless, the gold rush fueled a population boom in California, leading it to statehood in 1850.

Nearly fifty years later, in 1897, another gold rush began in Canada’s Yukon Territory. It soon moved west to Alaska. More than 100,000 people made the journey to the frozen, unsettled territory. Searching for gold in Alaska proved to be much more dangerous than searching in California. The Alaskan wilderness was guarded by mountains, and winter temperatures regularly dropped to -50 degrees Fahrenheit. As a result, Alaska grew more slowly than did California. Alaska did not become a state until 1959.

ISTEP+ English/Language Arts Sample Items (Grades 6-8)
(Beginning in Spring 2009)

Describe the challenges that people faced when searching for gold. Support your answer with details from the article.

Scoring:

- 2-point Constructed-Response rubric

Example of a Top-Score Response:

Searching for gold was not as easy as everyone had hoped it would be. Many who mined for gold in California didn't find much. Prospectors who decided to look for gold in Alaska realized that it was dangerous because Alaska's winters were so cold. Another reason that digging for gold was so difficult was because mountains surrounded Alaska's wilderness.

8.) Grade 7 Multiple-Choice (Standard 4 – Writing Process)

Read the following sentences. Choose the sentence that should come FIRST if all the sentences were written as a single paragraph.

- A. Once he knocked over a picture frame and broke the glass in it.
- B. My little brother can cause a lot of trouble.
- C. Another time he threw a whole plate of crackers on the floor.
- D. I know, because I end up baby-sitting him quite a bit.

Correct Answer: B. My little brother can cause a lot of trouble.

9.) Grade 7 Constructed-Response (Standard 3 – Literary Response & Analysis)

Read “Sammy’s Adventure”. Then answer the question that follows.

Sammy’s Adventure

When they reached the river, Sammy splashed cold water on his face; he was hot and scratched from the journey through the thick brush. Sammy noticed that Tina and Robert had already forgotten the **tedious** climb and were busy skipping flat stones across the river. Since his cousins had lived in the rugged Jackson Mountains all their lives, they were used to hiking. After resting for a few minutes, Sammy started upstream to search for the rapids that Tina said they would swim across. By the time Sammy found the white, splashing water, Tina and Robert had joined him.

The river was considerably narrower and deeper here, and the swift water gushed around giant boulders. Sammy was an excellent swimmer, but he had never before attempted to swim across a current. As he waded in and then swam quickly into the current, he wondered if he would make it. He approached the first boulders and pulled past them with strong, **decisive** strokes. It was thrilling because he felt as if he were testing his strength against the strength of the current.

Sammy could see that the river formed a pool just ahead of him. It looked a bit calmer; he could probably catch his breath there. Suddenly, the current grabbed him and pulled him under. The river was far deeper here than he had realized. As he hit bottom, he felt his pant leg snag on a branch. Sammy struggled desperately because he knew he would soon be out of air. Finally, he was able to kick himself clear, and with a few vigorous strokes, he emerged near the opposite shore.

He climbed out and flopped on the bank, exhausted but safe. His cousins, beaming, waved to him, obviously unaware of his narrow escape in the river. Sammy just took in a deep breath and smiled back.

tedious: tiring

decisive: firm

ISTEP+ English/Language Arts Sample Items (Grades 6-8)
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Describe what happened in the story that put Sammy in danger. Support your answer with details from the story.

Scoring:

- 2-point Constructed-Response rubric

Example of a Top-Score Response:

Sammy wasn't used to swimming against the current, and it pulled him underwater. He swam into the current without knowing how deep the water was or if he could make it through to safety. Sammy also had trouble when his pants got caught on a branch while he was underwater.